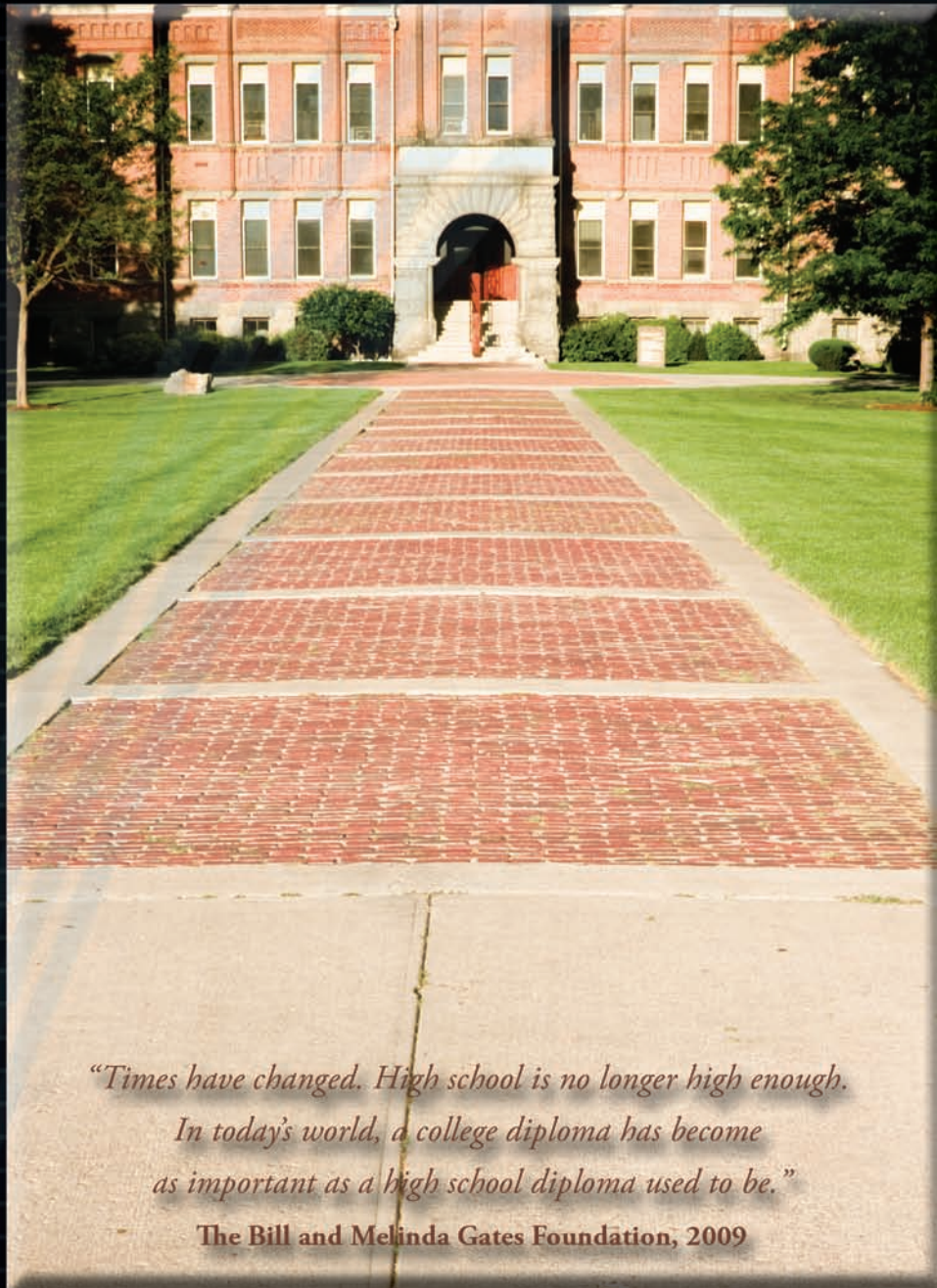


Beyond High School:  
**BUILDING  
BETTER  
FUTURES**



*"Times have changed. High school is no longer high enough.  
In today's world, a college diploma has become  
as important as a high school diploma used to be."*

**The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009**

**St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project**



## Methodology

In late 2008, a consortium of corporate and foundation leaders and college access providers joined forces to develop a coordinated strategy for increasing the number of low-income students in the St. Louis area who enroll and succeed in college. They came together to advance one vision: *to increase the proportion of students in the St. Louis region who earn higher education degrees to 50% by 2020.* As a first step, these College Access Pipeline Project (CAP) partners commissioned Dr. Terry Jones, a political science professor at University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Cynthia Palazzolo, a doctoral student, to create the first regional "report card" on college access in the St. Louis area. Their research includes data on educational outcomes of low-income students, ages 15-20, and provides a comprehensive inventory of existing programs aimed at increasing college enrollment. This paper is a summary of that study. The full report, totaling 375 pages, may be accessed online at [www.deaconess.org](http://www.deaconess.org).

## CAP Area PUMA Designations



- 1** St. Louis Outer Metro  
*(Franklin, Lincoln, Warren Counties)*
- 2** St. Charles County West
- 3** St. Charles County East
- 4** St. Louis County Northeast
- 5** St. Louis County Northwest
- 6** St. Louis County Inner Ring North
- 7** St. Louis County Far West
- 8** St. Louis County West Central

- 9** St. Louis County West Outer Suburbs
- 10** St. Louis County Inner Ring South
- 11** St. Louis County South Outer Suburbs
- 12** St. Louis City North
- 13** St. Louis City Central
- 14** St. Louis City South
- 15** Jefferson County

The report focuses on the seven largest Missouri counties in the St. Louis region, including St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson County, Franklin County, Warren County, and Lincoln County. Throughout the report, this area will be referred to as the CAP area. The report examines how this CAP area is faring in moving toward higher post-secondary completion rates, especially among three under-represented groups: low-income students, those with no history of post-secondary completion in their families, and minorities. Specific topics include outcomes measurements, such as high school graduation rates, college persistence rates, ACT participation rates, FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application rates, and MAP (Missouri Assessment Program) scores, as well as input factors, such as free and reduced lunch share, teacher-student ratios, teacher degrees, salaries and experience, and daily attendance rates. After summarizing the trend for each outcome and input measure over the most recent five years, the analysis explores connections between each input factor and each outcome measure.

Information in this report is presented at the national, state, CAP area, county, district and school building levels for most data. In addition, data are provided for the 15 Public Use Micro Data (PUMA) areas within the region. Each PUMA represents a contiguous area with a minimum 100,000 population. The PUMAs are used extensively in this summary report, as they provide statistically valid and reliable estimates for the socioeconomic factors being discussed. The CAP area includes three PUMAs in the City of St. Louis, eight in St. Louis County and four in outlying counties, as shown on the map at left.

Also included is relevant information from 34 providers of college access services and support programs, and the 18 colleges and universities either located in the CAP area or educating significant numbers of undergraduates who reside in the CAP area.

The recommended strategies at the end of this summary report were developed by the CAP Steering Committee members, based on the data analysis, interviews with school leaders and service providers, a review of current academic publications, and the CAP partners' own experiences.

*A copy of the full College Access Pipeline Report can be downloaded from Deaconess Foundation's Web site at [www.deaconess.org](http://www.deaconess.org).*

## The College Access Pipeline Project

Denise, Martin, Jamal, Aaron and Alicia each come from low-income families in the St. Louis region. Each attends one of the 82 public high schools in the seven most populous counties of the St. Louis region. Each hopes to pursue post-secondary education and each has the academic qualifications to do so. Yet, statistics show that only one or two of these young people will actually go on to college, and the odds are worse that those who do will continue on to degree completion.

The barriers to higher education that these young people face are significant and varied. Affordability is certainly an obstacle. The lack of a rigorous high school academic program or access to experienced, qualified, motivating teachers and counselors holds some back. Others must try to forge a new path without the support of family, school, or others who know how to navigate the system and will provide encouragement.

Over the past five years, the St. Louis philanthropic, business, education and nonprofit communities have become increasingly interested in college access. The desire to help students reach their highest academic potential and to cultivate “homegrown” talent is strong. So too is the realization that a high school diploma is no longer sufficient. In the 21st century, the bar is set higher.

To date, there has yet to be a coordinated effort in the St. Louis region to articulate a shared strategy for developing a college access pipeline. The **St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline\*** Project (CAP) was created to address this need. The group is galvanized by one goal: **to increase the proportion of students in the St. Louis region who earn higher education degrees to 50% by 2020.** Today that number hovers below 25%. CAP’s

**“Businesses have a need for skilled, well-educated employees. For the St. Louis region to be competitive, we must emphasize the importance of post-secondary education. We need to make sure students are prepared for training programs, job readiness programs, and our colleges and universities.”**

— *Kathy Osborn,*  
*Executive Director,*  
*The Regional Business Council*

objective over the coming years is to support the building of a coordinated system of college access efforts that give college-capable low-income students the chance to pursue and complete post-secondary education.

As this report documents, we can identify what students need to prepare for college, the roadblocks in the college access process, and what will help them persist in their post-secondary pursuits. St. Louis has made measurable progress and has strong examples of successful programs that are working in schools across the region. We are seeing progress in the number of students taking the ACT test, applying for financial aid, and enrolling in college. More area high schools are embracing the importance of establishing a “college-going culture.”

What is still needed is a coordinated set of regional strategies and policy recommendations and a regional commitment to help students, teachers, families and schools make college access a reality for all who aspire to it. That is the objective of this CAP project.

College completion can be a game-changer for students like Denise, Martin, Jamal, Aaron and Alicia. For the St. Louis region as a whole, it is a gateway to a brighter future.

*\* Throughout this report, the term “college” is used to represent all post-secondary education. The CAP Steering Committee recognizes that, for some students, college may mean vocational/technical training, community college, or other education apart from a four-year degree program. What is important is that every student has the ability to continue his or her education beyond high school and complete a degree.*



## Why College?

As we reach the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the evidence is clear: a high school education is no longer sufficient to compete successfully in today's economy. College completion drives the national economy and our ability to compete in a global economy. The United States once led the world in college graduations; today, more than 10 other nations have higher college graduation rates, and the trend is not moving in our favor.

### U.S. Annual Earnings of Full-Time Workers, 2007

2007	
<b>Overall</b>	
Less than high school degree	\$23,000
High school diploma	\$29,000
Bachelor's degree	\$48,000
<b>Whites</b>	
Less than high school degree	\$25,000
High school diploma	\$30,000
Bachelor's degree	\$48,000
<b>African American</b>	
Less than high school degree	\$20,000
High school diploma	\$26,000
Bachelor's degree	\$40,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey.

For an individual, earning a college degree gives one power over one's future path and financial security. For the region, increasing the number of college graduates is a critical economic development strategy.

- In Missouri a full-time worker with a bachelor's degree earns 156 percent more than a high school graduate and 230 percent more than a high school dropout.
- Having more college-educated workers in a community boosts the wealth of the community as a whole. For every one percent increase in the region's bachelor degree share, there is a corresponding 1.6-1.9 percent increase in the wages of those with a high school education or less.
- As the St. Louis region's economy becomes less dependent on traditional manufacturing jobs and focuses more on high tech industries—healthcare, biotechnology, communications—the need for a more highly skilled and educated workforce is greater than ever.

Higher college completion rates also increase the financial and social benefits to the region. Compared to non-degree holders, college graduates tend to be healthier, smoke less, exercise twice as often, spend more time with their children on educational development, volunteer twice as often, and have voter participation rates 20-30 percent higher than average. This translates into lower health care costs, fewer demands on social services, and greater civic engagement.

## Where We Stand Today

If the St. Louis metro area is to compete successfully for jobs, attract new employers or expand existing companies, improved access to and attainment of education beyond high school is essential.

The American Community Survey, published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, ranks the St. Louis region 24th among the 35 largest metro areas in the country in the share of its total population with a baccalaureate degree. The region ranks 31st in the share of its African American population with a baccalaureate degree. Not surprisingly, the St. Louis region also ranks only 27th in median household income among the 35 largest metro areas.

The challenge is region-wide. Among the 15 PUMAs in the St. Louis area, all areas have at least three-fourths of their 18-24-year-olds with a high school diploma. Yet only three, in the western portion of St. Louis County, have a majority of their 25-and-older population with a baccalaureate degree. In seven PUMAs (primarily in the City of St. Louis, inner ring suburbs and outlying areas), the share of those with a bachelor's degree is less than 25 percent.

Moving more of these high school graduates on to higher education is the challenge facing the St. Louis region.

**A Missouri full-time worker with a bachelor's degree earns 156% more than a high school graduate and 230% more than a high school dropout.**



**“The key to long term and sustainable success in any business is a talented and educated workforce. It's up to all of us to help students obtain post high school education as well as the means to pay for it. Here in St. Louis, especially, we must all work together to provide opportunities that will ensure our region's growth.”** — Maxine Clark,

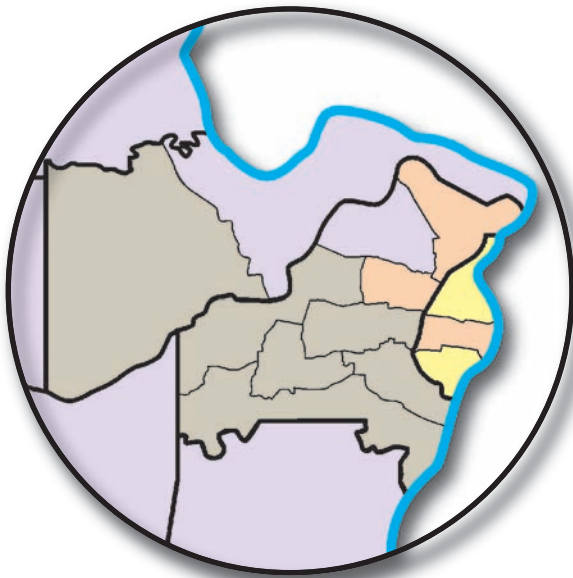
*Chief Executive Bear, Build-A-Bear*

**Selected Metropolitan Areas:  
Share of Population 25 Years-and-Older with a Bachelor's Degree,  
by Race, and Median Household Income**

Metropolitan Area	Overall Baccalaureate		Whites Baccalaureate		African American Baccalaureate		Median Household	
	Share	Rank	Share	Rank	Share	Rank	Income	Rank
Washington	47.3%	1	57.7%	1	29.5%	1	\$83,200	2
San Jose	43.7%	2	51.4%	3	28.6%	2	\$83,793	1
San Francisco	42.8%	3	52.5%	2	22.6%	9	\$73,581	3
Boston	41.8%	4	44.2%	4	23.0%	6	\$68,142	4
Minneapolis/St. Paul	36.8%	5	38.6%	11	20.2%	16	\$63,698	5
Atlanta	34.1%	9	39.5%	9	25.4%	3	\$57,189	16
Baltimore	33.3%	11	37.6%	13	19.6%	18	\$63,669	7
Charlotte	32.6%	13	37.1%	16	21.3%	11	\$53,221	23
Chicago	32.3%	15	39.1%	10	18.7%	21	\$59,255	11
Kansas City	31.6%	16	34.8%	20	14.7%	33	\$53,508	22
Indianapolis	30.2%	18	32.5%	24	16.6%	27	\$53,101	24
Cincinnati	28.2%	23	29.1%	30	16.5%	28	\$52,023	28
<b>St. Louis</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>\$52,465</b>	<b>27</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey.

**High School Graduation Rate**

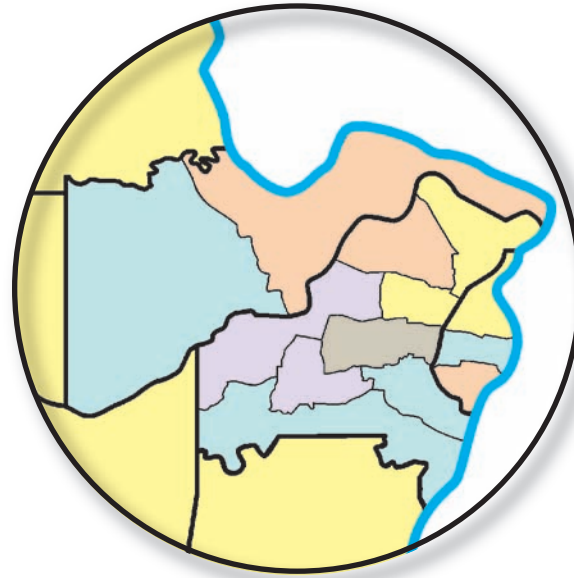


2008 High School Graduation Rate

- 40-69%
- 70-79%
- 80-89%
- 90-100%

While much of the CAP area maintains high school graduation rates above 90 percent, several areas in St. Louis City and inner ring suburbs have rates significantly lower. College access efforts must be advanced in tandem with an effort to raise the graduation rate.

**Baccalaureate Degree**



% College Degrees

- 10-19%
- 20-29%
- 30-39%
- 40-59%
- 60-100%

The share of 25-and-older individuals with a baccalaureate degree varies widely across the CAP area.

## School Commitment and Student Success

When Christopher Williams graduated from University City High School in 2008, he was in the top 20% of his graduating class. Among his many responsibilities, Chris helped to care for a great-grandmother with Alzheimer's disease. He is the first in his family to attend college.



Chris was fortunate to attend University City High School, where the commitment to postsecondary planning is evident every day. In addition to taking advantage of the college preparatory curriculum provided by the high school and the assistance of College-Career Resource Coordinator Katherine Bailey, Ph.D., Chris was a participant in College Bound. He received additional individual and direct support throughout his college planning and admissions as well as continued support from the program once he began college. Chris now attends University of Missouri-St. Louis as a sophomore.

"College Bound provides our students with hope by inspiring them to further their education," said Joylynn Wilson, school superintendent. "They have given students, many of whom are first generation, the belief that college is a destination they can reach if they just stay the course."

CAP data demonstrate University City's commitment to college access and success. Over five years (2004-2008), the high school has cut its cohort dropout rate in half and increased its graduation rate by 20 percent. The proportion of graduates enrolled in college one year after high school graduation increased 31 percent in that same five years.

### College Access Programs Supporting a College-Going Climate at University City High School

*College Bound, St. Louis*

*Gear Up*

*The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis, Student Advocate Program*  
*University of Missouri-St. Louis, Bridge Program*

## Potential Barriers to College Access

### Individual Barriers

There are many factors that contribute to whether or not a student will graduate high school and pursue post-secondary education. Research shows that low-income students face significantly more challenges than their more affluent peers. Similarly, high schools in high poverty areas are often ill-equipped to provide adequate support to first generation or low-income students.

***Family income generates the largest disparity in post-secondary degree completion.*** In 2005, only 30 percent of students from households with incomes less than \$30,000 were either in college or had already graduated, compared to 42 percent of those from households with incomes between \$30,000 and \$49,999, and 82 percent for those with family incomes over \$100,000.

**"In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, achieving true equality of opportunity has moved to the post-secondary level."**

—William Tierney, *Merit and Affirmative Action in Education, 2007*

***Having at least one parent with a bachelor's degree also has a major impact on college enrollment.*** Census data show that students are 35 percent more likely to proceed directly from high school to college if they have one or both parents with a college degree.

***African Americans remain less likely to go immediately from high school to college than Whites.*** While the enrollment rate differential between Whites and African Americans is shrinking, in 2007 68.5 percent of White high school graduates in the U.S. went to college compared to 55.0 percent of African Americans.

***Student-teacher ratios are higher where college access is lower.*** Student-teacher ratios in the CAP area are 13 percent higher than in Missouri as a whole. The five-year average ranges from 12.8-to-1 in County West Central to 28.8-to-1 in City South.

### ***Learning from qualified, experienced teachers makes a difference.***

Teacher salaries, education, certification and years of experience are all contributing factors to a student's college aspirations. Across the CAP area, 95.1 percent of teachers in 2008 met all requirements of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; percentages were lower, however, in the St. Louis Public Schools (82.7 percent) and the Wellston School District (75.0 percent). The share of teachers with advanced degrees is lowest in St. Louis City, Outer Metro, Jefferson County, and St. Louis County NE.

### ***Average daily attendance may predict college aspiration.***

Students who regularly attend high school are more committed to their education and likely have aspirations for higher education. Between 2004 and 2007, the PUMAs with lower attendance rates were City South (69.5 percent), City North (75.3 percent), and County Inner Ring North (85.1 percent), all areas with lower than average college enrollment.



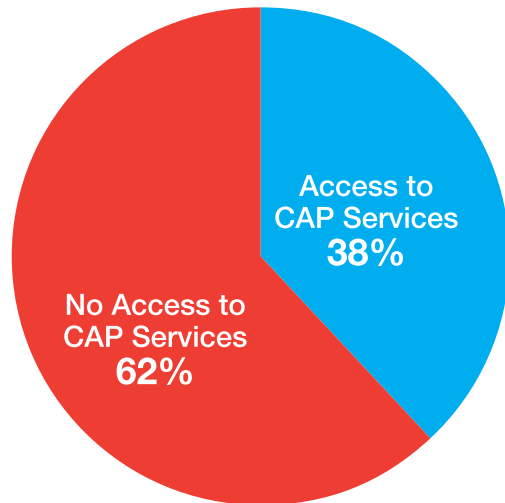
**Systemic Barriers**

***There are not enough college access support services available to low-income students.*** There are several youth-serving and college access programs in the St. Louis area that have demonstrated success in helping students and families at various stages of the college preparation, application and enrollment stages. Unfortunately, these programs are currently only available to approximately one-third of the estimated 25,000 low-income high school students in the CAP area.

***Uneven distribution of college access services.*** One challenge is to ensure that college access programs are available in all areas where there is need. Research shows that current programs are concentrated in 25 schools, primarily in the city and inner ring suburbs. One school—Soldan—has seven programs operating there; Roosevelt and Sumner each have six programs. Nine schools each have five programs, while 57 high schools in the CAP area are currently not served at all by outside service providers. Better coordination is needed to find ways to reach out to more students in more schools and eliminate duplicative efforts.

***Unreliable and inconsistent data.*** The lack of consistent and coherent data among schools and service providers is a barrier to the development and implementation of college access programming. Currently, there is no common set of metrics used

**Low-Income Student Access to Programs & Services**



across the region’s educational landscape. Different providers measure and value different factors, making it difficult to contrast and compare the effectiveness of programs and provide funders with clear feedback on the best use of resources. Most important, data on students’ persistence in college is self-reported and statistically unreliable.

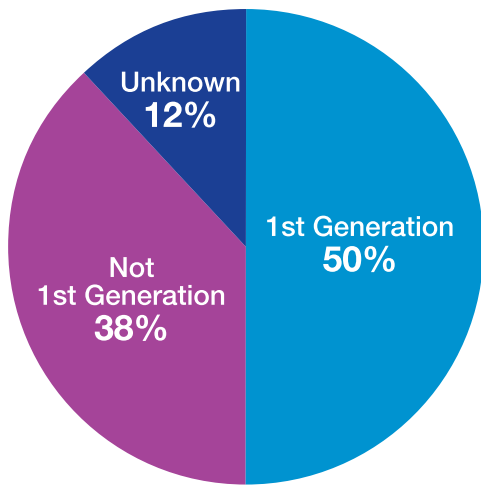
## Components of College Access

The good news is that there has been extensive research on what building blocks low-income students need to prepare for, attend and excel in post-secondary institutions. The CAP research, based on a comprehensive literature and best practices review, has identified six components that must be part of any long-term college access strategy.

### 1. College as a Goal

For many low-income students, an important first step toward college access is simply choosing college enrollment as a goal. While more affluent students may see post-secondary education as a logical progression after high school, too often low-income students view college as unattainable, for a variety of reasons.

#### First Generation College Students in the CAP Area



Making college a goal must start at an early age, and it must be reinforced and supported throughout the high school years. Parents must encourage their children to set their sights on college, even if the parents themselves do not have college degrees. Friends and peers also play an important role. “The composition and purpose of a peer group influence academic achievement and students’ likelihood to pursue and persist in post-secondary education.” (Sallee and Tierney, 2007: 8)

Recent studies have suggested that college aspirations are becoming more universal. A 2002 national sample of 10th grade students reported that 80 percent said they planned to pursue a bachelor’s degree or more. (Wirt et al., 2004). *The next step, therefore, is providing the supports to help them turn those aspirations into achievable post-secondary plans.*

## 2. Academic Preparation

Educational experts at all levels agree: a rigorous academic program is a MUST for college success. To be successful in college, a student needs to learn key skills, especially writing and mathematics, and have a solid grounding in the humanities, social studies, and the sciences.

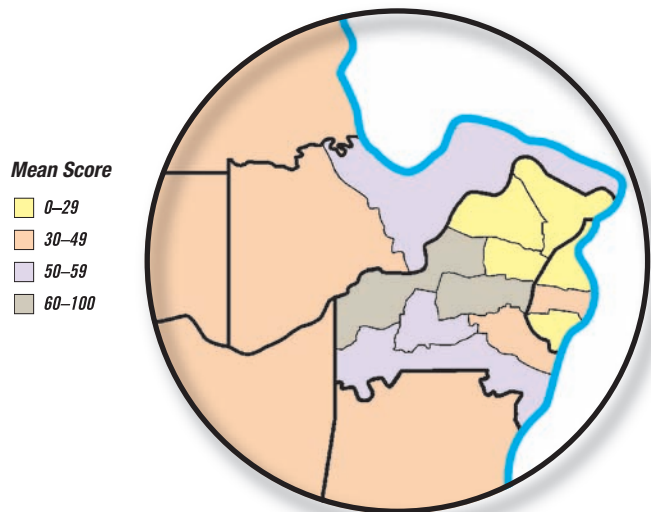
For low-income, first generation, and minority youth, however, acquiring a solid, college preparatory education is a documented challenge. Underfunded schools, underqualified teachers and counselors, and inadequate school resources often mean that many low-income students leave high school without the course work and depth of knowledge needed for them to gain access to and succeed in college. Unstable family environments, resulting in frequent housing relocation and changing of schools, further hinder students’ ability to learn in a consistent manner.



High school graduates, especially racial and ethnic minorities and low-income students, must be better prepared to handle college curricula. Secondary schools and higher education institutions must work together to identify and coordinate curriculum standards to ensure that students are fully prepared for the challenges they will face after high school graduation.

### Mathematics Proficiency

*The share of 10th grade public high school students testing at or above Proficient or Advanced for the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Mathematics in the seven-county College Access Pipeline (CAP) project area by Public Use Microdata (PUMA), 2006-2008.*



*Academic preparation, as demonstrated here by the performance of 10th grade students on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) math test, remains low in areas with the highest concentration of low-income students. The full CAP report shows similar performance results for students in science and communication arts.*



### 3. College-Going Climate Within High Schools

Another key factor in creating a college access strategy is the establishment of a college-going climate within the high school. Just as family and neighborhood peers influence post-secondary education aspirations, so too does the atmosphere within the school itself. In an extensive study of the Chicago Public Schools, researchers Nagaoka, Roderick, and Coca (2008) concluded: *“Across all our analyses, the single most consistent predictor of whether students took steps toward college enrollment was whether students attended a school with a strong college-going climate.”*

A college-going climate is typically marked by several variables: teachers expect most students to go to college and feel it is part of their job to prepare students for college; they help students plan for college outside of class time; the curriculum is focused on helping students get ready for college; and most students plan to go to college. Creating such a climate is not easy. Still, a number of local schools are placing more emphasis on post-secondary degree attainment, working with outside service providers in some cases, and ramping up internal efforts to boost graduation rates and provide enhanced academic, counseling and other support for students and families to encourage college applications.

### 4. Navigating the Process

Wading through college applications and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a cumbersome and inefficient process for anyone. For low-income parents and students, especially first generation college applicants, the process can be overwhelming. Completing the college application paperwork, writing essays, signing up for and preparing for the ACT test, obtaining transcripts from one or more school districts, and meeting deadlines are daunting challenges, especially if there is no support person available to provide guidance along the way. Applying for financial aid adds yet another layer. The FAFSA form, a prerequisite for all federal and most state aid programs, has over 100 items and is complex and intimidating. In this sea of red tape, it can be easy for college aspirations to fade in the face of frustration.

In certain parts of the CAP area, progress has been made in recent years in terms of the number of area students taking the

ACT test, completing the FAFSA forms, and enrolling in college. But more support is needed across the region to ensure that there is an adequate number of counselors, volunteers, and others who can assist students and their parents in navigating this critical process.

### 5. Affordability

“Anger, frustration and hopelessness.” Those were the words Leroy, now a freshman at Missouri School of Science & Technology, used when he realized he had exhausted all his resources before ever arriving for the first day of school. After paying for tuition, room and board, he had nothing left to cover transportation to the campus, let alone the clothes, bedding and other costs of going to college.

For many low-income students, spiraling costs have put the goal of college out of reach. Even with schools’ attempts to increase need-based financial aid, the net cost of a higher education has risen much faster than most families’ adjusted gross income. Between 2003 and 2006, at half of the 14 higher education institutions which CAP area students primarily attend, tuition hikes outpaced the growth in need-based aid. The average price to attend a public four-year college represents nearly 60 percent of annual income for low-income families. (Kahlenberg, 2004: 3) For many of these families, not only must they find ways to finance college, but they must do so without the benefit of the student’s part-time income, which is often an important part of the family’s economic picture.

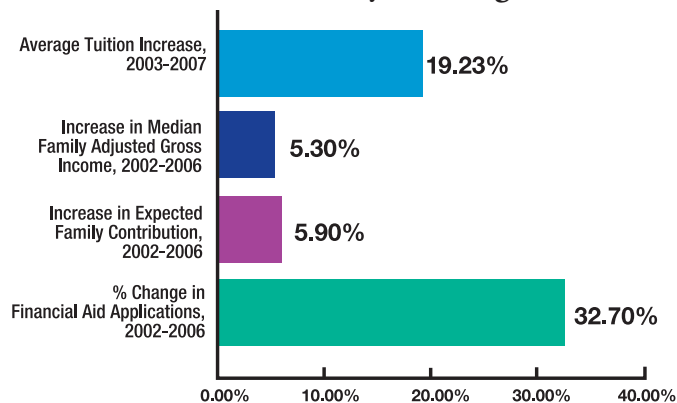
Clearly, more scholarship money is needed to support low-income students. But other supports are also needed to ensure that families can manage all of the costs and implications of the college years; that they have the skills to manage whatever debts they may incur; and that they fully understand the often-confusing array of loan and grant programs that accompany most financial aid packages.

In Missouri, the A+ Schools Program pays community college tuition for students who graduate from a “designated A+ high school” with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher, an overall grade 9-12 attendance rate of 95 percent or higher, and “a record of good citizenship.” For 2008-2009, the state allocated \$25,200,000 for the program. It is important to note that some of the school districts with the highest poverty rates (i.e., St. Louis City, Wellston, Normandy, Jennings, and University City) are not included in the A+ Schools Program.

**“I always knew I wanted to go to college, but no one in my family knew how to connect the dots between wanting to go and knowing how to go. It was like a secret code that my community never got the password to.”**

— Arnold, St. Louis Public Schools senior

**The Affordability Challenge**



*Tuition at CAP area colleges and universities is rising much faster than families’ incomes, prompting a dramatic surge in financial aid applications.*

## Shared Goals: Students and School Strive for Success



Only a few years ago, Sunita Manu was living in a refugee camp in Central Africa, having fled the civil unrest in Liberia. Four years later, she was an honor student at Roosevelt High School and valedictorian of her graduating class.

Sunita's rise to success was aided by advice and assistance from teachers, counselors, the Scholarship Foundation Student Advocate, and her College Summit Advisor, all of who helped her achieve her goal of attending college. She listened to their recommendations and implemented their suggestions. "Sunita meticulously prepared herself for success in college by pursuing a rigorous course load, added Kate Flynn, her A.P. English teacher.

"I have made the effort to be the best that I can be," Sunita said at graduation. "Success is not measured by how well you fulfill the expectations of others, but by how you honestly live up to your own expectations." Today, Sunita is enrolled as a pre-med student at Newman University in Wichita, KS.

Sunita's high school principal, Terry Houston, is planning on more successes like her. "At Roosevelt, our expectations are high. We want our students to see their high school diploma as their passport to further education and training," he says. Under his leadership, Roosevelt is beginning to show encouraging signs of establishing a college-going culture. Roosevelt's course offerings are becoming more rigorous. A new partnership with St. Louis Community College means that all juniors take the Accuplacer test to determine how prepared they would be to take college-level courses. Roosevelt currently partners with College Summit, GEAR UP, Scholarship Foundation, St. Louis Internship Program, and Saint Louis University volunteers. In 2009, it also became a College Bound site.

The numbers look good. Since 2005, the percent of graduates enrolled in college one year after high school graduation has risen from 22% to 43%; the percentage of students pursuing four-year colleges has risen from 8% in 2005 to 21% in 2008; and the ACT participation rate has gone from 20% to 52%. Roosevelt continues to face a significant dropout rate, but its leaders believe that if students know that high school can help launch them into promising futures, more students will be convinced to stay.

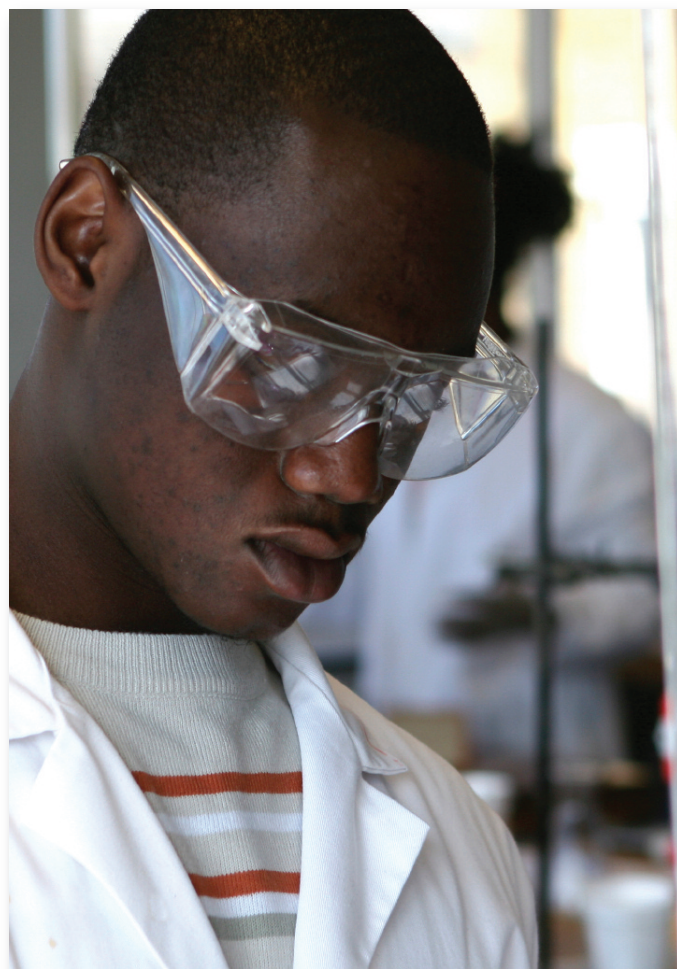
"There is, I believe, a college, a trade school, an educational option for everyone and I believe once students start seeing that, they buy into it and they start getting excited," said Brian Kruger, College Summit Advisor. "Now, I have college admissions people calling me saying 'we want some of your kids.'"

## 6. Persistence to Graduation

Since 1970, college enrollment among minority students has risen significantly, but there has been no discernable increase in the percent of minority students who graduate. The St. Louis region ranks 31st out of 35 metropolitan areas in terms of degree completion among African American students.

Getting into college is only a first step. Helping students succeed once they are in must be an integral part of a college access strategy. Students entering college still need supports to ensure that they adjust to college life and demands and they can succeed. Student needs may be academic, such as requiring basic or remedial courses to help them "fill in the gaps" in their secondary education. Some needs may be financial, such as teaching them how to manage their time when juggling class work and a part-time job. Others may be psychosocial: helping them become better integrated into the college environment and adjust to a life that may seem foreign at first.

Solving the persistence issue is one of the major challenges facing college access program providers and schools. While much of the responsibility for student retention falls on the colleges and universities, more can be done to involve parents, high schools and service providers, to implement "early warning systems," and to improve summer transition and orientation programs.



### St. Louis: Responding with Promise

The issue is clear: low-income high school graduates need intentional and coordinated services to succeed in higher education.

The CAP report found that there are more than 35 nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions that provide one or more programs that are preparing students to succeed in post-secondary education. The researchers interviewed 30 of these groups. The participating nonprofits fell into three categories: those having college access and success as their primary mission; those with early intervention and college aspiration as their primary mission; and those with youth development programs that have college access as a component. Nearly all of the area universities also have retention and persistence efforts on campus, although the depth of those programs varies widely. This constellation of programs exists to address the very building blocks that low-income students need to succeed in post-secondary education.

The CAP research also found that the increasing attention and resources being directed to college access programming have had some initial encouraging results.

- Several districts with the highest percentage of low-income students have seen college enrollment rates among their graduates increase in recent years. University City has seen a 16 percent increase between 2006 and 2008; the St. Louis Public Schools have witnessed a 12 percent increase. Both are districts where intensive college access services have been added during that same time period.
- The percent of students taking the ACT test has increased dramatically in Wellston (4.8 percent in 2004 to 100 percent in 2008) and St. Louis Public Schools (51 percent to 93 percent), where staff and faculty have made that a priority.
- The PUMAs in the CAP study area have seen an increase between 19-39 percent in the share of FAFSA applicants between 2002 and 2006.
- African American enrollment in area colleges and universities increased 12 percent between 2003 and 2007.

While these services are producing results, they are not available to the majority of students in need. As noted earlier in the report, only 38 percent of the low-income students in the CAP area are receiving any specialized college access services.

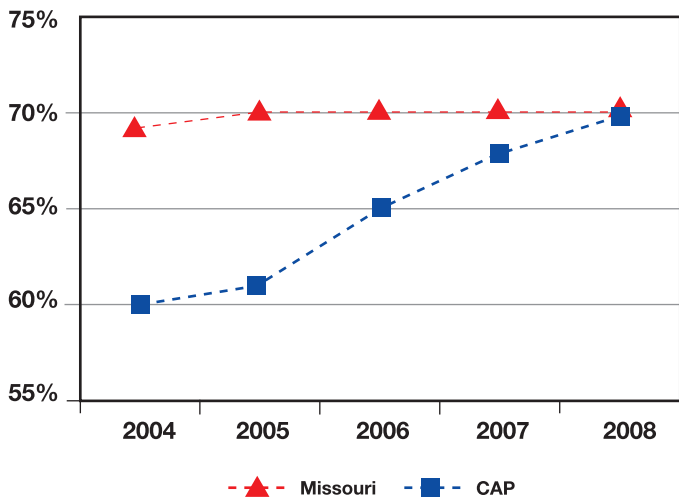
**“None of my family went to college. My mom couldn’t help me with my homework. They told me I was smart but you just don’t know. You don’t see anybody who has reached that level, college I mean, so you don’t think you could.”**

— Alexis, class of 2012, Saint Louis University

### Moving Forward

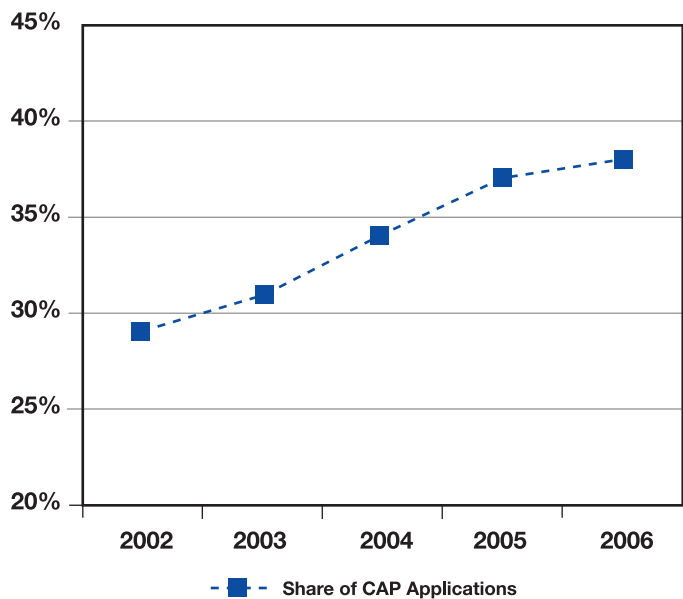
The St. Louis area also appears to be making progress faster than competing metro areas, as seen by share of population enrolled in college. In 2007, 8.7 percent of the 15-and-older population in the region was enrolled in a college or graduate program, ranking St. Louis 15th among the 35 largest metropolitan areas, ahead of Kansas City, Indianapolis, Charlotte, Cincinnati, and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

**Overall Public High School Graduate’s ACT Participation Rate**



The percent of students in the CAP area who take the ACT test has risen sharply in the past four years and is now almost equal to the statewide average.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Applicants**



More students in the CAP area are filing federal financial aid applications each year, a clear indication of a growing interest in post-secondary education.



**Graduation and Persistence Rates in Districts with Free/Reduced Lunch Rates that are over Fifty Percent**

DISTRICT NAME	Free and Reduced Lunch Mean % 2004-2008	Graduation Rate 2004	Persistence Rate 2004	Graduation Rate 2008	Persistence Rate 2008	2004 ACT Participation Rate	2008 ACT Participation Rate
Wellston	79%	64%	80%	52%	22%	5%	100%
St. Louis City	66%	65%	52%	50%	65%	51%	93%
Normandy	67%	71%	62%	61%	61%	58%	53%
Jennings	62%	87%	65%	84%	55%	52%	59%
Riverview Gardens	60%	86%	53%	66%	25%	33%	n/a
Hancock Place	60%	78%	54%	84%	48%	54%	39%
University City	53%	68%	65%	81%	85%	69%	69%
Maplewood - Richmond Heights	52%	88%	90%	89%	52%	46%	59%

*\*Persistence Rate is the percentage of the previous year's graduates who are reported as attending a two-year or four-year institution 180 days after graduation.*

*Between 2004 and 2008, college persistence rates have gone up in two of the highest poverty districts.*

## College Access Programs in the Region

(Note: additional information on each of these programs can be found in the full report at [www.deaconess.org](http://www.deaconess.org).)

### Youth Development Programs with College Access Components

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri  
Beyond Housing  
Boys Hope Girls Hope  
Cultural Leadership  
Girls Incorporated  
Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club  
INROADS  
Mathews-Dickey Boys & Girls Club  
St. Louis Internship Program  
Wyman Center  
YMCA of Greater St. Louis

### College Access Programs

College Bound, St. Louis  
College Summit-St. Louis  
Missouri College Advising Corps  
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis  
Strive for College

### University-Based Programs

Harris-Stowe State University, Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound  
Jefferson College  
Lindenwood University, Office of Student Success  
Maryville University  
Missouri State University  
Ranken Technical College, Student Achievement Center  
Saint Louis University  
St. Charles Community College, First Alert  
St. Louis Community College  
University of Missouri  
University of Missouri-St. Louis, Bridge Program and Center for Student Success  
Washington University, College Application Process Strategies Program



**"In the next decade, 90% of all jobs will require education beyond high school, yet only 25% of the population earns a four-year college degree. Students admitted to quality trade and technical colleges need significant academic preparation in math, science and literacy. The workplace of the future will require academically prepared individuals with postsecondary degrees, whether the employee is a technician or a physician."**

— Stan Shoun, President, Ranken Technical College

## Strategies

By 2020, CAP envisions a coordinated system of college access efforts that ensures college-capable low-income students will pursue and complete post-secondary education. What are some next steps? CAP encourages community dialogue and action on the following important topics:

### 1. How can college access providers and funders ensure that low-income students receive adequate and coordinated services?

- Expand effective efforts to reach more low-income students in more schools.
- Direct services to schools in greatest need.
- Align services within schools to avoid duplication.
- *Responds to College Access Components: College as a Goal, Creating a College-Going Climate, Navigating the Process and Persistence to Graduation.*

### 2. What tools would support the creation of a college-going culture in CAP high schools and youth-serving organizations?

- Communicate essential components identified in research and provide tips, tools and training for how to establish a college-going culture.
- Encourage schools to start discussion early, to implement rigorous curriculum, to assist in individual postsecondary planning, and systematically involve families in learning about options for the future.
- *Responds to College Access Component: Creating a College-Going Climate.*

#### A necessary prerequisite: good data

*What steps can be taken to assure that schools and programs collect and maintain verifiable (third-party), disaggregated outcome data on students served? CAP encourages action on the state level to change the current methods of measuring postsecondary outcomes. In the future, data should include the full span of postsecondary enrollment and be tracked over enough years to measure initial enrollment rates, persistence to the second year (with 20 or more credits earned), and degree completion.*

### 3. How can we remove obstacles that prevent low income students from obtaining funds for higher education?

- Create a common application for private need-based scholarship funds and encourage additional investment in such funds.
- Advocate strengthening the availability of need-based aid at the institutional, state, and national levels.
- Support the simplification of FAFSA and the process of verification of financial need which now stand between many low income students and the funding to which they are entitled.
- *Responds to College Access Components: Navigating the Process and Affordability.*

### 4. Is there a way to involve postsecondary institutions in improving academic preparation?

- Develop a pilot program to provide high schools information about the academic successes and challenges of their students at the post-secondary level.
- Pursue P-20 Councils as a means of improving academic rigor and curriculum consistency.
- *Responds to College Access Components: Academic Preparation and Persistence to Graduation.*

### 5. Can we broaden community focus to make college enrollment AND persistence to completion priorities?

- Engage colleges and universities in discussion of student success strategies specific to low-income students.
- Encourage investment in practices known to increase persistence.
- Measure success by degree completion, using an interim benchmark of 20 or more credits earned prior to the second year.
- *Responds to College Access Component: Persistence to Graduation.*

#### Multiple strategies, a singular goal:

*Addressing these issues and investing in solutions will increase the proportion of students in the St. Louis region who earn higher education degrees to 50% by 2020.*

## 1 + 1 = 3

“One of the core goals of the College Access Project is to ‘grow the pie’ of resources for students in St. Louis,” explains Faith Sandler, executive director of the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis. In January 2009, when the Scholarship Foundation received word of the College Access Challenge Grants, a new funding stream from the Missouri Department of Higher Education, Sandler was quick to share the opportunity with her peers. In May 2009, five College Access Project participant organizations (College Bound, College Summit, the Missouri College Advising Corps, St. Louis Internship Program and the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis) were granted a total of nearly \$500,000 in new dollars to help increase post-secondary access for low-income students. From the start of the grant, the providers have met to explore how they can effectively serve more students and leverage each other’s expertise and services.

“The Missouri Department of Higher Education is dedicated to providing information to Missouri students and families on postsecondary benefits, opportunities and planning,” said Timothy Hopkins, research associate with the Missouri Department of Higher Education. “We are delighted to be a partner with the five St. Louis College Access Project organizations in this important undertaking.

**“The whole process [of applying to college] was confusing, but trying to figure out loans was the hardest. Without help, I would have run up thousands of dollars in needless interest fees and debt. I feel sorry for families who don’t get guidance.”**

*— Andrea S., Parent, class of 2009*



## The College Access Pipeline Goal

To increase the proportion of students in the St. Louis region who earn higher education degrees to 50% by 2020.

## How You Can Help

The recommendations suggested in this report are only a starting point for a community-wide strategy to improve college access for all high school students throughout the region. Opportunities exist for individuals, school and community groups, funders, and others to get involved in an ongoing effort to develop and implement effective solutions to this critical regional need.

If you want to help, or just want to learn more, please contact any of the Steering Committee members listed here.

### Read the Full College Access Pipeline Report

A complete version of the College Access Pipeline Report is available in pdf format at [www.deaconess.org](http://www.deaconess.org).

Funding for the College Access Pipeline project has been provided by Citi, Commerce Bank, Deaconess Foundation, Enterprise Holdings, Greater St. Louis Community Foundation, Trio Foundation, United Way of Greater St. Louis, and the University of Missouri. In-kind support was also received from Citi, Deaconess Foundation, the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis, and Sigma Aldrich.

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## For More Information

For more information, please contact the CAP Steering Committee co-chairs:

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Enterprise Holdings

Ann Korschgen  
University of Missouri-Missouri College Advising Corps

Lisa Orden Zarin  
College Bound, St. Louis

*“As a community, all stakeholders should be concerned with the availability and access to college planning information for high school students. The growth and success of our nation depends on citizens who are prepared to compete in the global market. A college educated citizenry increases the odds of our nation’s success in the world economy. All of us should take seriously the task of providing students with college access information.”*

— Stephen Warmack, Principal, Clyde C. Miller Career Academy  
(Clyde C. Miller Academy raised its college enrollment rate from 68% in 2005 to 75% in 2008.)